

COMMENCEMENT DAY.

Again the little school-house looms
A thing of smiling life and joy.
Again its door is open wide
To laughing girls and rosy boys.
There's buzzing in the hallway where
The little dinner pails have landed
Like tiny ships returning home
From ports with beaches golden sand.
The dainty harkness pantaloons
Vie with the knickerbockers trotting
Across the narrow aisles the while
The pedagogue is swiftly jolting
There on the old blackboard his screed—
Ah! Time, you never can erase it—
Life is earnest, life is real.
Ah me, again I turn to face it.

There on the front row touching toes
Upon the floor—feet cannot reach it—
The short-legged lads and lassies sit
Awaiting fame; ah! who shall teach it?
Arranged behind the rearward desks,
Desks carved by many an artist's eye,
The robust grown-ups of the farms
Exchange warm glances swift and shy.

The clattering feet are stilled at last,
Each whispered message has been
spoken;

The pedagogue taps on his desk
With his grim awe-inspiring token,
Then silence falls; there knowledge stands;
In him it centers and intensifies.
He holds the key to open the door.
The old-time country school commences.
—Lester Seymour Keller, in N. Y. Sun.

PALMISTRY.

BY A. A. MILNE.

Alone James did it. I have told him since that I owe him a debt of gratitude which I never, never can repay. His reply, that he would rather I owed him something which I could repay, touched me deeply, but had no other immediate result.

I must give you his name in full: James Arthur Brocklebank. Perhaps some day will find me teaching my children to lip that dear name at their mother's knee. This is what they do in novels, though I should not think "Brocklebank" allows of much scope for liping. Still, there it is.

It was at a fancy bazar. Most of us at the hall were helping in some way. Our dear hostess was selling—what are those things that ladies buy?—while her daughters had sweet and scented and tobacco stalls and so forth. I thought at first that I was the only unemployed one until James strolled up.

"Hello," he said; "you're doing nothing."

"I wanted to help," I explained. "My idea was to keep a tobacco-stall, and then one could smoke cigarettes all the time. The assistants in shops always do that to advertise their goods."

"O! And I suppose assistants in sweet shops eat sweets all the time?"

"Of course."

"Have you ever thought," said James, reflectively, "what a tired time the right-hand man of a butcher must have?"

"Look here," I said, "did you come to talk to me?"

"No; I want you to have your fortune told. There's a palmist here."

"But I haven't a fortune."

"You don't want one. Half a crown's enough."

I went with him under protest. It was a very dark tent into which we plunged, and I could see no fortune teller.

"Where is she?" I asked, impatiently.

"The other side of the curtain," said James; "but you mustn't go in. You put your hand through there, and she is on the other side. Of course, if she saw you it would spoil everything."

"Who is it?"

"Never mind."

I put my hand through. Some one took it, and it seemed as though she was going over the lines of my palm with a pencil.

"Don't do that—please," I said.

"It tickles."

There was a light laugh from behind the curtain.

"You are very ticklish," said a voice.

"That isn't palmistry," I remonstrated.

"You are also quick-tempered, slow-minded, thin-skinned—"

"Fat-headed, go on!" I said, bitterly. "Just you wait till I see you."

"I'm awfully sorry," said the voice. "I don't think I have the right hand."

"Of course you haven't. It's the left."

"Yes, that's right. Oh, I see! I was looking at it upside down. You are modest, clever, athletic and of an artistic temperament."

James laughed unkindly.

"Did you laugh?" asked a voice.

"Certainly not!" I replied. "I wouldn't think of such a thing. But you're only saying things I know already. Won't you tell me my future?"

"You will be married within a year."

I gasped.

"Did you gasp?" asked a voice.

"That was the impression I intended to convey. But are you sure?"

"Quite, quite sure. The line of the heart says so."

"Heart lines, old chap!" said Jim, nudging me.

"What did you say?" asked the voice.

"Nothing," I answered. "What you heard was a hitherto honored and respected friend being kicked. But I say, tell me. When shall I be engaged?"

"Before the end of the week."

"Hi! Jim, quick!" I shrieked.

"What's the day now?"

"The thirteenth," said Jim.

I shot a glance of scorn and loathing at him.

"Sorry, old man," he said, hurriedly. "It's Saturday."

"Why—good Lord—then I shall get engaged to-night!"

"Why not?" asked Jim.

"Why not? You idiot! She's not even in the house. She's in London."

"Who is?"

"Who?—why—O, nobody. You see what I mean. There's nobody in the house that—"

"It's no good," said James, with a grin.

"You've given yourself away."

I turned back to the curtain.

"Are you still there?" I asked.

"Are you there, are you there, are you there, are you—"

"I've finished, thank you," came the voice.

"But are you quite sure about being engaged by the end of the week?"

"Quite, quite sure," said the voice, a little shakily.

James and I went out.

"Who is she?" I asked. "I didn't recognize the voice."

"O, she'd take good care about that."

"Well, anyhow, it's impossible."

We entered the refreshment tent and drank things. Jim tried to be facetious about my rapidly approaching engagement. He even misquoted poetry to me. Things about love and so on.

"Did you make that up yourself?" I said, wearily. "It's very bad."

"Why, it's Shakespeare, man," he said, indignantly.

"O, thought it was you."

"I don't mind having it," he said, and ordered a third drink. "Kindly observe the new Swan of Avon."

"Are swans such great drinkers, then? I didn't know."

"You're in a nasty, horrid temper, and I shall leave you," said Brocklebank.

I watched him go through the door of the tent. Some one was coming up. He went on and spoke to her. It was a lady. He came back with her and brought her up to me. Good Lord! It was Kate!

"He'll give you tea," said James. "I must go. Good-by."

He raised his hat and went off.

"It is impossible," I said.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Kate. "Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Go away. You're in London."

"I've just this moment come. You knew I was coming, didn't you?"

"No, I've hardly seen anyone. I've only just come myself. Why, what train—"

"Never mind the train," said Kate, hurriedly; "I want some tea."

We had tea. All the time I was wondering if I dared "to put it to the touch, to win or lose it all." At last I took out a penny and tossed it. If it turned tail, why, then, so would I. But if not—

"Heads," said Kate.

"It is. That settles it. After all, who am I to blast the reputation of a respectable and, for aught I know, beautiful palmist?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," complained Kate.

"Kate," I said, impressively, "it's written on my hand"—and I showed her my hand—"that I shall get engaged to-day."

"Is that what they call short-hand?"

"It's palmistry. The line of heart has done something exuberant."

"Well, I hope she'll have you," said Kate.

"Do you think she will?"

"You should ask her."

"I am," I said, and I took her hand. "Dear, do you think she will?"

"I don't know," said Kate, looking down. "Perhaps she might."

"Only—just—Kate, she's not sure she will."

"Quite, quite sure," said a voice. Something in the words struck me. She looked up at me with a smile. Then I began to understand.

"Kate!" I cried.

"Isn't it a beautiful day?" said Kate.—Black and White.

HABITS OF THE JAGUAR.

Interesting Chapter on the Most Stealthy and Ferocious of Felines.

The trails of the jaguar are many, but they nearly all lead to a river, for water appears to be more needful to the tiger than to any other member of the cat family. And this is not that he actually drinks more, so far as I can learn, says a writer in *Outing*, but rather because along the waterways he finds an easy and abundant food in the river hog, in the small deer that come down to drink and in the fish that swim plentifully in all these streams.

In the Rio de la Plata, just off Buenos Ayres, is an island where at one time a number of jaguars lived and thrived practically on the fish they caught, for there was nothing else on the island, and none ever heard of their visiting the mainland, because of its settlement and not on account of the distance to shore, for the tiger is a strong, bold swimmer and minds no river of South America, not the widest, if he wishes to reach the opposite bank. He is a patient, unerring fisherman, watching for long periods from some vantage point, which may be either a fallen tree trunk extending into the stream or at the bank's edge, until a victim appears—when with a lightning blow he hurls the fish out on to the bank or clutches it as he swims past.

While the swampy jungle and the water courses are his habitat, yet the jaguar will make incursions upon dry ground if cattle or horses or poultry offer, and river food happens to be scarce or for the time being more difficult to secure. I heard several trustworthy accounts of cattle and colts killed by the jaguar, though his ravages are not so frequent as once they were owing to his further inland habitat. His method of killing animals of this size is literally to stall them up wind, that no scent may reach the victim, and then to spring on their back, fastening teeth and claws in the neck; with smaller animals the jaguar springs for the neck at once, and appears to prefer the hind quarters to the stomach, which is left for the vultures that are omnipresent in the open country.

Tigre is a much noisier animal than any other of the feline family, particularly at night, and roams the jungle disdainful of other beasts in his manifest superiority. And he is without doubt absolute king of the South African forest; there is literally none to dispute his domain, none even worthy to do him homage, for the puma, which is fairly plentiful, has as little the courage of his convictions in South as in North America.

He Knew His Business.

A lady going through a hospital during the last war saw a couple of soldiers sawing and hammering and said: "What are you doing?" "Making a coffin; that's all." "A coffin, indeed, and who is it for?" "That fellow over there," pointing to a cot. The lady looked and saw that the man was alive and watching what was going on.

"Why," she said, in a low voice, "that man is not dead, and perhaps he won't die." "Oh, yes," insisted one of the men, "the doctor told us to make the coffin and I guess he know'd what he giv' him."

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When They Can.

Some men adapt themselves to circumstances, while some others adapt circumstances to suit themselves.—Chicago Daily News.

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